The Excellency of the Christian Revelation, as it Removes the Guilty Fears of Sinners, and their Ignorance of God.

A

SERMON

Preach'd in the

Cathedral Church of St. *PAUL*,
April the 3d. 1699.

Being the Fourth, for this Year, of the Lecture, Founded by the Honourable

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LONDON,
Printed for *Tho. Parkhurst*, at the *Bible* and *Three Crowns* in *Cheapside*, near *Mercers Chappel*, 1699.

1 TIM. I. 15.

This is a faithful ſaying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Chriſt Jeſus came into the World, to ſave Sinners, ——

IN treating on theſe Words, I have endeavor'd to ſhew the *Credibility* of the *Saying* in the Text, and its *Worthineſs to be receiv'd* by us, from the Intrinſick Evidence, which it carries along with it, *viz.* its manifeſt agreeableneſs to thoſe Notions, which we naturally have concerning God and our ſelves. To make this appear, I proceeded in the following Method.

First, To conſider who the Perſons are, whom *Chriſt Jeſus came into the World to ſave.*

Secondly, What kind of *Salvation* he propoſeth to them.

Thirdly, In what way and manner he hath by his *coming into the World* obtain'd this *Salvation* for them.

I have done with the *two* former of theſe Heads, and have enter'd upon the *third*, in diſcourſing of which, my deſign is to make

it evident, that the Method in which our Lord hath obtain'd *Salvation* for us is so excellent in it self, so suitable to the Nature of things, so agreeable to all just apprehensions concerning God and our selves, so well adapted to our Necessities and our reasonable Desires, that the *Saying* in the Text is highly *credible*, and *worthy of all acceptation* upon this account also.

To this purpose I *first* observ'd, that the most comprehensive Notion we can frame of our blessed Saviour's Undertaking is, that which the Holy Scriptures plainly teach us, that he acted as a *Mediator* between God and Men; and that it is perfectly agreeable both to the Nature of God, and of fallen Men, that there should be a *Mediator* between them.

I then proceeded to consider the Office of a *Mediator*, and to shew, that the way in which our Lord doth execute this Office, is altogether agreeable to our most just and reasonable Conceptions.

There must be, as I then observ'd, these *two* general Designs, which our Lord must be suppos'd to have carried on, in the execution of his *Mediatorial* Office.

First, To do whatsoever might satisfie Almighty God, in order to his being reconcil'd to Men.

Secondly, To do also whatsoever should be found necessary in behalf of Men, in order to the reconciling them to God.

The

The *first* of these I consider'd the last time, and now proceed to the *second*, *viz.* to shew how our Lord hath executed the Office of a *Mediator*, in providing for the Necessities of fallen Men, and doing whatsoever might be found requisite, in order to the reconciling them to their Maker; and I doubt not but that upon serious consideration it will appear, both that there was very great need of the assistance of a *Mediator* upon Man's account; and that no Method we can possibly think of could have so fully answer'd this end of providing for our Necessities, as that which our Lord by his *coming into the World*, hath been pleas'd to take.

It might have been imagin'd indeed, that the main difficulty had lay'n, in obtaining the Favor of an offended God to his Apostate Creatures, and that, as immediately upon the first apprehension of the Divine displeasure, sinful Men should have been ready to implore the Mercy of their Creator; so upon the first intimation of Mercy, they should have been forward to receive it: but upon Examination we shall find, that there was really much greater difficulty in recovering Men to God, than in reconciling God to Men.

For such is the Divine Goodness, that nothing was necessary on God's part, but only to make it fit for him to forgive his Creatures, and to receive them to Mercy. The tender compassion of our Heavenly Father was mov'd towards his disobedient Children, as soon as ever he beheld them miserable through their own Folly; and because his Holiness and Justice and Wisdom made it highly requisite (as I have observ'd in my last discourse)

that an Expiation ſhould be made for the diſhonour done to theſe Attributes by the Sins of Men, his Goodneſs therefore mov'd him to find out and to appoint an Expiation, which ſhould be entirely Satisfactory to him, and to ſend his only begotten Son into the World to this purpoſe. For which reaſon the Scripture ſo often magnifies the Love of God, in giving his Son for us. *In this,* ſaith St. *John, was manifeſted the love of God towards us, becauſe that God ſent his only begotten Son into the World, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and ſent his Son to be the Propitiation for our Sins.* After which there could be no place left for a ſuſpicion of his readineſs to accept the Satisfaction, which was offer'd to him by this Mediator of his own appointing.

1 Joh. 4. 9, 10.

But with Men the caſe was far otherwiſe. There was much indiſpoſition and inability in them, likely to obſtruct their returning to God, and being reconcil'd to him. It was no light Undertaking to remove the Suſpicion and Jealouſie, which Sinners had entertain'd, with reſpect to the divine Goodneſs, which they were Conſcious they had ſo unworthily diſoblig'd; and to take off that averſion of Mind from God, which naturally follow'd upon ſuch a Jealouſie. A new diſcovery of Divine Truth, and a freſh ſupply of Spiritual Strength became neceſſary, upon account of the ignorance and weakneſs which Men had contracted; and particularly the interpoſure of Supernatural Grace to Conquer the perverſeneſs and obſtinacy of their Wills. And after all much Power and

Wiſ-

Wiſdom were requiſite for removing all the remaining inconveniencies and miſchiefs, which the Sins of Men had expos'd them to, and the compleating that Salvation which they ſtood in need of. That therefore which we have to do, is to take a particular and diſtinct view of the various Neceſſities of fallen Men, which were to be provided for by a *Mediator*, in order to the reconciling them to God, and conferring *Salvation* upon them; and to ſhew that *Jeſus Chriſt*, by his *coming into the World*, hath ſo abundantly provided for all theſe Neceſſities, and that in a manner ſo far ſurpaſſing any other Method, which our thoughts are able to ſuggeſt to us, as thereby farther to recommend his Inſtitution to our *Belief* and *Acceptance*, as worthy of God, and fit for us. And this we may do under the following Heads.

Firſt, Men by their Apoſtacy had fallen into a Suſpicion and Jealouſie, with reſpect to the divine Goodneſs, and an alienation of Mind from God, as the Conſequence thereof.

Secondly, They were degenerated into an ignorance of God, and of themſelves, and of the ſeveral particulars of their Duty.

Thirdly, They had contracted an indiſpoſition and inability to comply with the divine Will, when fully and clearly manifeſted to them.

Fourthly, After all they were under an incapacity of removing many other evil and miſchievous conſequences, which their Sins had expos'd them to, and obtaining for themſelves that complete Salvation which they ſtood in need of.

Of

Of each of these I shall by God's Assistance discourse severally, and shew, as I go along, how our Lord in executing his *Mediatorial* Office hath provided for all these Necessities.

First, To begin with that Suspicion and Jealousie, with respect to the divine Goodness, which Sinners were fallen into, and that Alienation of Mind from God, which was consequent thereupon.

This I formerly took notice of, when I mention'd the Case of our first Parents, as represented by *Moses*, how they discover'd their dread of Almighty God, and the Estrangement of their Minds from him, immediately after their Fall, by declining his Presence, and hiding themselves from him, as soon as they had any intimations of his approach. I observ'd likewise, that this is in some measure the case of all Sinners, that have not hardned themselves by a long Custom in doing evil. And if we take a view of Mankind, antecedently to any known declaration of God's Mercy to them by some expres Revelation, we shall find that 'tis true in experience, that there arises an awe and dread from the Consciousness of Guilt, together with a dissatisfaction as to the Ways and Means of appeasing the divine displeasure, the consequence of which must be, according to the frame and constitution of Humane Nature, a want of that filial Reverence and Love, which is due to the great Father of all.

And this I take to have been the apparent ground of those many superstitious Practices in the Pagan World, whereby they attempted to atone

atone their ſuppoſed Deities, even by very unnatural Methods, ſacrificing to that purpoſe, not only all ſorts of Animals, but even thoſe of their own kind, offering up humane blood, the blood even of their Sons and Daughters, for the expiation of their Sins. For, although I doubt not, but ſacrificing had its Original from a divine Inſtitution, and that Tradition had ſpread the Practice throughout the World; yet this Tradition being by degrees corrupted, Men fell into the uſe of ſuch Sacrifices, not as God had at firſt appointed, but as to their own vain and fooliſh Imaginations, which varied in different Regions, ſeem'd moſt likely to appeaſe the wrath of their incenſed Deities. It was from their miſtaken and corrupted apprehenſions of the divine Nature, that they invented Expiations, which it was neither fit for the divine Majeſty to accept, nor for reaſonable Creatures to offer: but it was their conſciouſneſs of guilt, conſpiring with an antient Tradition, which did naturally and reaſonably move them to think ſome Expiation or other requiſite; and foraſmuch as they did not well know, what might be acceptable, there ſtill remain'd a diſſatisfaction and uneaſineſs, after all their attempts that way.

But not to look ſo far abroad. I dare appeal, for the truth of this, to the inward ſenſe of our own Minds. Let but any man faithfully conſult his own Conſcience, and recollect the thoughts which have ariſen within his Breaſt, whenever he has been Conſcious of having done an ill thing, I doubt not, but if he will ingenuouſly own what he finds there, it will be to this purpoſe; that his guilt

guilt has made him not only aſham'd, but afraid too, it has poſſeſt him with a juſt apprehenſion of the diſpleaſure of the Almighty, it has more or leſs eſtranged his Mind from that excellent Being, render'd him ſhy of addreſſing himſelf to him, and doubtful of his acceptance; if he was not formerly habituated to acts of Devotion, he became upon this more averſe to them; if he had been accuſtomed to addreſs himſelf ſeriouſly to the Almighty, his Devotion henceforward became cool and flat, his Faith and Hope in God were apparently abated, and he was in danger of contracting an habitual eſtrangement from him, unleſs from the encouragement which the Goſpel gives to Repentance, he quickly bethought himſelf, and recover'd his temper again. Inſomuch that I doubt not, but it is much more difficult for a man deeply ſenſible of any guilt that he has contracted, either to forgive himſelf, or to believe firmly that God hath forgiven him, than it is for God to do it. It requires both a great ſenſe of the divine Goodneſs founded upon the doctrine of the Goſpel, and a temper like to that of God therein repreſented, for a Man that knows and feels what it is wilfully to have tranſgreſs'd the Laws of his Maker, firmly to believe and hope in him.

And all this ſeems to ariſe from the make and conſtitution of our Souls. It hath pleas'd our Creator wiſely and graciouſly to order the matter ſo in our very formation, that this uneaſineſs and diſſatisfaction, this fear and dread ſhould be the conſequence of our doing amiſs, from a kind of natural Inſtinct, as a reſtraint and check upon us,

that

that we might not only apprehend the malignity of Sin from reasoning and inferring, but might also be sensible of it by inward feeling; insomuch that he who wants such a sense, after any sin knowingly and wilfully committed by him, is one who either never yet had his Mind awaken'd to an apprehension of divine things, or who has stupified his Conscience by a long Custom in Evil-doing.

'Tis true, as I before observ'd, we have implanted in us natural apprehensions also of the divine Goodness and Mercy: but forasmuch as the Holiness and the Justice of God (concerning which I had occasion to discourse in my last Lecture) are as evident to our thoughts as his Goodness is, there is a foundation of Fear, as well as of Hope, laid in our Minds, and such a Fear, as will be apt to keep the Sinner at a very uneasie distance from his Maker, till he shall be pleas'd some way or other to reveal his Mercy to him.

God hath indeed given many intimations of his kind Intentions towards the Children of Men, all along since their first Apostacy, by sparing, preserving, and providing for them, by bestowing innumerable Blessings upon them, by *doing them good, and giving them rain from Heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling their hearts with food and gladness*, thereby *not leaving himself without witness*, as the Apostle speaks. Nay he hath, as we Christians believe, laid a sure foundation for the hope of Mankind, by his gracious Promise made to our First Parents, of the *Seed of the Woman*, which to the Nation of the *Jews* was still further ex-

Act. 14. 17.

Gen. 3. 15.

plain'd and confirm'd by following Predictions, and might by the help of an obscure Tradition be the occasion also of reviving Mens Hopes in God, even in other Nations, all which was but an imperfect Edition of the Gospel Revelation. But by *this* only we have the ground of our Fear wholly remov'd, and our Hopes render'd clear and lively.

For nothing certainly can be conceiv'd of equal force for restoring the Faith and Hope of Mankind in their offended Creator, with the consideration of his having sent his only begotten Son into the World to become our *Mediator*. This is
Tit. 3. 4. a Declaration of *the Goodness and Philanthropy of God*, such as we could not have in the least expected, nor can possibly desire or imagine any that should equal it. We may fairly from hence argue
Rom. 8. 32. with the Apostle, *He who spared not his own Son, but deliver'd him up for us all*, (who first *spar'd him not*, but *gave him* from his own Bosom, and again *spar'd him not*, but *gave him up* to all those grievous Sufferings, to which he was expos'd in our Nature, and for our sake) *how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* The condescension of so great and excellent a Person, one so near to the Father of all, in coming into this lower World, cloath'd with our Nature, by the designation and appointment of God, was such a Demonstration of the Care and Concernment of the Almighty on our behalf, as upon our first belief of it must necessarily create in us a lively Hope, that he had gracious and merciful Designs for our good. But if we add to this, what our Lord de-

clar'd,

clar'd, and did, and suffer'd for us in our Nature, there can be no farther place left for Suspicion or Jealousie for the future.

This was one main Design of our Saviour's Preaching, to declare the good Will of his Heavenly Father toward the Children of Men, and his readiness to receive them, upon their return to him. They are his own words, *God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting Life. For God sent not his Son* (as he justly might have done) *to condemn the world, but that the world through him might be saved.* When in the Synagogue he took the Book of the Prophets into his hands, opening his Commission, and declaring to what purpose he was anointed of God, it was by applying those words of *Isaiah* to himself, *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor, he hath sent me to heal the broken hearted, to preach deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.* Joh. 3. 16, 17. Luk. 4. 18.

His whole Conversation was one continued declaration of the divine Goodness and Compassion to Sinners, he doing all he did in the Name, and by the Authority of the Father, of whose *Person* he was *the Express Image* or *Character*. To the end that he might revive the hopes even of the worst of Men, if they could but be prevail'd with to repent of their evil ways, he did, as we know, frequently converse with *Publicans and Sinners*, assigning these as his Reasons for doing so, that Heb. 1. 3.

Matt. 9. 12, 13. *the whole need not a Physician, but they that be sick,* and that *he came not to call the righteous, but sinners*
Matt. 11. 28, 29 *to repentance. The weary and heavy laden*, those who labour'd under the burden and sense of their Sins, he kindly invited *to come to him*, promising them *Rest*, and encouraging them by that *meekness and lowliness of heart* which he was ready to exercise towards them. Such indeed was his *Meek-*
Matth. 12. 20. *ness*, as never *to break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoaking flax*, not in the least to discountenance any who were honest and well-meaning, but to encourage their first applications to him. Such we know his practice was with respect to *Zacheus*, *Mary Magdalene*, and the *Syrophœnician* Woman, making these Examples and Instances of his readiness to accept the Repentance and Faith of Sinners, whether *Jews* or *Gentiles*.

And least all this should not be sufficient, that he might render Mens Faith and Hope in God firm and unmoveable, he laid down his life for
Matt. 26. 28. them, *shedding his blood* (as himself declares) *for the remission of Sins*.

Mankind in general were apprehensive of the need of a Sacrifice to be made for Sins, being led into this apprehension (as I have already observ'd) partly by an antient Tradition, and partly by a sense of guilt, and as the consequence thereof great doubts and fears concerning the divine acceptance; and the *Jews* had been admonish'd of the need and use of Sacrifices, by the Law of *Moses*; our *Mediator* therefore once for all offer'd up such a Sacrifice, as might for ever put an end to the use of that Rite, and yield full satisfaction to the minds

of

of Men, that complete Expiation was now made to God for their Offences. *The blood of Bulls and of Goats* could *sanctifie* only *to the purifying of the flesh*, that is, could make a man legally clean, according to the Prescription of the Law of *Moses*: But it was *the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offer'd himself without spot to God*, which alone could *purge the Conscience from dead works*. For, as the same Writer again argues a little after, *It is not possible that the blood of Bulls and of Goats should take away sins*; No! but *we are sanctified through the offering of the Body of Jesus Christ once for all*; and *by* this *Offering, he perfecteth for ever them that are sanctified*, both expiating the guilt of their Sins, and giving full satisfaction to their doubtful minds; so that we now *have boldness, or liberty, to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us through the Veil* of *his Flesh*; and under the Patronage of this *High Priest we may draw near with a true heart and full assurance of Faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil Conscience.*

Heb. 9. 13. Ver. 14. Heb. 10. 4. Ver. 10, 14, 19, 20, 21, 22.

And here by the way, we may take notice of the Wisdom of God, in disposing the Method of our Reconciliation in such manner, that by one and the same Act, *viz.* that of dying upon the Cross as a Sacrifice for Sin, our *Mediator* gave entire Satisfaction both to God and Man; to God, upon account of the dishonour done to his Holiness and Justice, as I shew'd in my former Discourse; and to Men, upon account of the fear and dread with which their Minds were possess'd by reason of Guilt.

And

And thus I have done with the *first* of those Neceſſities, for which our *Mediator* provided, by his *coming into the World*. I proceed to the next.

Secondly, Men by their Apoſtacy were likewiſe degenerated into groſs Ignorance of God, and of themſelves, and of the ſeveral particulars of their Duty.

What knowledge of God, and of matters relating to our Spiritual Welfare, Men are capable of in this lapſed State, if they would ſeriouſly attend to the Suggeſtions and Reaſonings of their own Minds, and diligently uſe the Faculties which God hath given them, need not be diſputed. If we would know what need the World ſtood in of inſtruction from God, 'twill be proper to examine, into what degree of Ignorance it was degenerated, when our Lord came into it, and how the Caſe ſtands at this time, whereſoever the Goſpel is not yet divulg'd.

They were not only falſe, but monſtrous Opinions, which the Pagans had generally entertain'd concerning the Deity. They had either totally loſt, or notoriouſly confounded the Notion of the one true God, Maker of Heaven and Earth, introducing a multitude of Gods, concerning whom they had no ſettled apprehenſions, but abundance of fooliſh and abſurd Opinions, according to the variety of their looſe and wanton Fancies. *They chang'd the truth of God into a Lye*, as the Apoſtle excellently expreſſeth it, *and worſhipped and ſerved the Creature, more than* (at leaſt * beſide, over and above) *the Creator, who is bleſſed for ever.*

Rom. 1. 25.

* παρὰ τὴν κτίσιν.

They

They were for the most part insensible of the Spiritual Nature of God, which they plainly discover'd by the multitude of their ridiculous Images, as well as by the whole Order of their Worship. They had gross misapprehensions with respect to the Moral Perfections of the divine Nature, ascribing those Qualities to their Gods, which would be a dishonour to any reasonable Creature, as appears not merely by the Writings of their Poets, but more undeniably by their impious and unclean Rites of Worship.

Nor were the Vulgar only misled into these gross Errors; but men of all Ranks and Orders amongst them, even those *who profess'd themselves to be wise* Rom. 1. 22. *became fools* in this respect; and although some of their Philosophers attain'd to wiser and better apprehensions themselves, yet they generally comply'd with the Vulgar Modes of Worship, which, howsoever they might endeavour to accommodate to their own apprehensions, by certain interpretations they put upon them, were extremely unworthy of the Majesty of the true God.

And if they thus mistook and prevaricated with respect to God, and the Worship which they perform'd immediately to the Deities they own'd, no wonder if at the same time they had very false Notions also with respect to other parts of their Duty; especially considering that they were not only ignorant of God, but of themselves too.

They knew not their Original; they had lost the Tradition of being descended from one Common Stock, as likewise of the institution of Marriage by God himself in the instance of our first Parents.

Parents. They were unacquainted with the History of Man's body being form'd out of the Duſt of the Earth, and inſpir'd with the breath of God, and conſequently did not ſo clearly diſcern the difference between the two parts of which themſelves were conſtituted. They were very uncertain at the beſt, as to the Spiritual and Immortal Nature of their Souls, and altogether at a loſs as to the condition of a future State, if there ſhould prove to be any. They were ſenſible by Experience of impetuous and diſorderly Appetites and Paſſions; but could give no tolerable account how this diſorder was introduc'd into humane Nature, nor did they generally apprehend the neceſſity they lay under of returning to the temper and ſtate from which they were degenerated, or of that Supernatural Aid, which was become neceſſary to this purpoſe. In fine, they knew not well for what purpoſe they were made, nor to what end they ought to direct their Lives.

All this Ignorance of themſelves they too plainly diſcover'd, in allowing divers practices contrary to the deſign and Law of God in Nature; ſuch as I ſhall at preſent take for granted were Polygamy, Divorce upon ſlight Occaſions, private Revenge of Injuries, not to mention the gratification of unnatural Luſts. In a word, they not having a juſt ſenſe of the difference between Soul and Body, and of the Relation this preſent ſtate of Life bears to a future, did not think themſelves oblig'd to lay that reſtraint upon either their Appetites or Paſſions, which is fit for a reaſonable Creature, deſign'd to live in this World in order to a better.

If

If we will judge by the Practices into which the generality of Pagans were degenerated, this will appear beyond Controverſie. So that St. *Paul* might well give that Character of them, that they were *dead in treſpaſſes and Sins*, that they *fulfill'd* Eph. 1. 1, *the deſires of the fleſh and of the mind*, finally, that 3. they *had no hope*, and were *without God in the* 12. *world*. And though there were ſome few to be found here and there, who had attain'd to better apprehenſions of things, and laid down ſtricter Rules of Life and Manners, than others; yet as their apprehenſions were very imperfect, and for the moſt part wavering and uncertain, ſo they did not expreſs themſelves in that plain, perſpicuous, and authoritative manner, which was likely to render what they ſaid uſeful to the generality of Mankind.

And as this was the ſtate of the World before the Revelation of Chriſtianity; ſo it is much the ſame, whereſoever this Revelation is not entertain'd, as appears from all the accounts we have of thoſe Countreys which are ſtill Pagan.

I think I need not here take into Conſideration, how far the *Mahometan* Religion has improv'd Men in divine Knowledge, where it has been introduc'd in the room of Paganiſm. For though 'tis readily acknowledg'd that it has made a Reformation in that one great Point, the confeſſing one God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth; yet conſidering the ridiculous Fables with which its *Alchoran* abounds, whereby God himſelf is very unworthily repreſented; the looſeneſs of its Precepts with reſpect to divers inſtances of Morality; not to mention the apparent Ignorance and Lewd-

neſs of its pretended Prophet, I am ſure no ſerious Deiſt will make any compariſon between *that* and the Chriſtian Revelation.

The *Jews* indeed had a fuller Revelation concerning God, and themſelves, and the particulars of their Duty, than the reſt of the World had; but as theſe were a very inconſiderable People, compar'd with the reſt of Mankind, ſo their Revelation and Rule of Life was in many reſpects imperfect, God in divers inſtances conſidering the weakneſs and rudeneſs of that People, and therefore not giving them ſuch Precepts as were beſt in themſelves, but ſuch as they could bear, deſigning the Revelation which he made to them, only as preparatory to that more excellent and perfect Revelation which he ſhould make of himſelf and his Will, by the coming of his Son Jeſus Chriſt.

To the conſideration therefore of *this* we are now to proceed, and I doubt not but it will eaſily appear, that our *Mediator* hath made a gracious and plentiful proviſion for this Neceſſity of fallen Men; and that whether we conſider his *Doctrine* or his *Life*, the former as an *Inſtruction*, the latter as an *Example* to us, to make us perfectly acacquainted with God and his Will concerning us.

I begin with the *Doctrine* of our Lord.

When he was Examin'd by *Pilate*, upon the Accuſation of the *Jews*, his Anſwer is remarkable,

John 18. 37. *To this end was I born*, ſaith he, *and for this cauſe came I into the World, that I ſhould bear witneſs unto the Truth. Every one that is of the Truth, heareth my Voice.* And his whole *Doctrine* is evidently worthy

worthy of that Title, its Truth being discernable by its own Light.

All that our Lord taught may be reduced to these *two* general Heads; either what God had before taught Men by the Light of Nature and Reason, but they had in a great measure forgot; or something which it became farther necessary for them to know, upon account of their Apostacy from God, and in order to their recovery to him, and which they could not have kown but by express Revelation.

As to the former of these, I dare upon the nicest Examination appeal to the Judgment and Conscience of those Deists, to whom I direct these Discourses, whether the Doctrine of our Lord, and that of right Reason do not perfectly agree. I will not say, that in this degenerate State, in which we now are, men did or could easily arrive at a just apprehension of all those Truths relating to Religion, which are truly natural, and agreeable to Reason, when once discover'd. We find by Experience, as I have already observ'd, that where Revelation was or is wanting, men have generally fallen into very gross and vile mistakes; and even the wisest and best of Men have come very far short in their Account. But 'tis enough to our present purpose, if when any Truth is laid clearly before us by Revelation, it then appears evidently agreeable to natural Reason; and this I affirm to be the Case with respect to most of the Doctrines of Christianity.

And it ought not by any means to be allow'd as an Objection against Christianity, that our

Lord hath superadded some Doctrines, which were not taught by the Light of Nature and Reason, provided always they be such, as do not contradict plain and evident Reason, and as when we throughly consider them, will appear highly useful to us, with respect to the state in which we now are. If Almighty God do exercise a Providence towards his Creatures, if he have that tender Care of and Compassion towards Men and Sinners, of which I have already discours'd, if he was graciously pleas'd to concern himself for us after our fall, and to reveal himself to us in order to our recovery, it cannot be thought otherwise, but that he should teach us some Truths relating to our present Circumstances, which we could not have known, but by immediate Revelation from him. 'Tis very becoming the Wisdom of God, when he revealeth himself to his Creatures in an extraordinary manner, to instruct them in what they knew not before, nay to teach them something, that according to their ordinary ways of thinking would not have enter'd into their Minds; and it must needs be a delightful entertainment to our Understandings, as well as a worthy Improvement of our Minds to contemplate and embrace such Truths. It is therefore a recommendation of the Christian Revelation, at the first hearing, that it pretends to discover such Truths to us.

But that I may treat this matter distinctly, I shall reduce what I have to offer as to our Saviour's Doctrine to these three particulars.

I. What it teacheth us concerning Almighty God.

II. Concerning our selves. And,

3. The

III. The Rules which it gives us for the directing our Tempers and our Lives.

I. To begin with the Doctrine of Christianity concerning Almighty God.

Now the Sum of the Christian Doctrine touching this Point is to the purpose following, *viz.* That there is but one God; that he is a Spirit, Eternal, Incomprehensible, and Unchangeable, Infinite in Power, Wisdom, Holiness, Justice, Goodness, and in all Perfection; that he gave Being to the World, and to every Creature in it; that his Providence is extended to all which he hath made, preserving and providing for every Being according to its nature; that he particularly concerns himself in the Affairs of Mankind; that there is nothing which relates to us, that either escapes his Knowledge, or is below his Care; that he observes all our ways, and that as he hath given us intimations of his Will, so he expects we should be observant of them; that he is well-pleas'd with us, when we do well, and displeas'd when we do otherwise; that he is full of Good-will towards us and truly desirous of our Welfare, of which he hath given us many Testimonies, in order to excite and establish our Faith and Hope in him, as well as to engage our Obedience and Submission to him.

And thus far I presume our Deist will go along with us; I am sure 'tis fit he should, there being nothing of what I have hitherto mention'd, but what is perfectly agreeable to the best reasonings of Men, and what has been acknowledg'd accordingly by those who have exercised their Reason in the best manner.

'Tis

'Tis true, some have made it a doubt, whether it were fit to suppose Almighty God to extend his Providence to so many and so minute Particulars, as the Christian Revelation plainly represents him to do; when we are assur'd for Instance, that *a Sparrow falls not on the ground without our Father*; and that *the very hairs of our head are all number'd*. But if we reflect upon the infinite Knowledge and Goodness of God; and consider that it cannot be below him to concern himself for the good of whatsoever he hath made; that the very same reason which mov'd him to give Being to any Creature, and to give it such a kind of Being as it hath, may well be suppos'd to move him also to take care of its well-being; and that it can be no manner of trouble or disquiet to him, to regard all the Affairs of the Universe at once; if I say we reflect upon all these things, we shall easily get above this doubt, and acknowledge, that what our Lord hath declar'd concerning the particulars before mentioned, is perfectly agreeable to the dictates of sound reason, worthy of God, as well as comfortable to men.

Mat. 10. 29, 30.

As to what Christianity hath farther reveal'd to us concerning God, 'tis to the following Purpose, *viz.* that the Father of all hath actually concern'd himself for the recovery of sinful Men, and that he hath done it by sending his only-begotten Son into the World to redeem us, and by giving his Holy Spirit to Sanctifie us, which is indeed more than we could have known concerning God without an express Revelation.

Now

Now as to the more general part of this Revelation, namely, that God hath actually concern'd himself for our Recovery, this is highly *credible and worthy of our acceptation* upon the grounds I have hitherto proceeded. For if as I have already prov'd, it be a reasonable apprehension concerning God, that he would in some way or other provide for the recovery of such of his reasonable Creatures as were capable of it, it must certainly be reasonable to hearken attentively to a Revelation, which assures us that he hath done so. This is to be dispos'd to believe, what we before hoped might be; and to embrace a Doctrine, which we thought would be credible, whensoever it should be reveal'd to us.

As to the particular way in which God hath done this, namely, by the Father's sending his Son to redeem us, and giving his Holy Spirit to Sanctifie us, this as it is a matter of pure Revelation, so it must be own'd, that it will lead us into some apprehensions concerning the Deity, which we could not have form'd of our selves. For in our reasoning concerning the divine Nature, our thoughts would have stopt at *the Father* of all, and reach'd no farther. Upon which account I cannot but reckon that the Notion of the Platonists, which bears so great a resemblance to that of the Christian Trinity, was by no means the result of their meer reasoning; but the remains of an Ancient Tradition. Which by the way is no small confirmation of the Truth of this Christian Doctrine, when something so very like it, and which there appears no plausible pretence for abou-

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bing to humane invention, was yet embrac'd by the very beſt among the Pagan Philoſophers, and that ſo heartily, as to be made an eſſential part of their Philoſophical Scheme.

I remember whoſe Lectures I am reading, and therefore will not tranſgreſs the Laws of our *Founder*, by entering upon this Controverſie as managed amongſt Chriſtians. 'Tis ſufficient to my preſent purpoſe, that, as I have already expreſt it, it is univerſally own'd as a Chriſtian Doctrine, *viz.* that the Father hath Redeem'd Mankind by his Son, and Sanctifieth them by his Spirit; and if this Doctrine, which is unqueſtionably Chriſtian, and our being Baptized according to it, in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghoſt, when we enter upon our Profeſſion, do neceſſarily lead us, as I ſaid, into ſome apprehenſions concerning the Deity, which we could not have taken up without Revelation, I ask, why this ſhould be any Objection againſt Chriſtianity.

After all the Controverſies which have been ſtarted amongſt Chriſtians, upon this ſublime Theory, 'tis agreed and ſtood to by all, that there is but one God, and that however the Chriſtian Trinity is to be explain'd (if it be fit to attempt the explaining it at all) it muſt ever be ſuppos'd conſiſtent with this Fundamental Article of all true Religion. Our Lord himſelf repeating, and confirming the Law of *Moſes*, ſaith, *Hear O Iſrael!* Mark 12. 29. *The Lord thy God is one Lord*; and all Chriſtians poſitively aſſert the ſame; even thoſe, who either through

through malice or ill-will are accus'd of asserting a plurality of Gods, utterly deny and abhor the Charge, declaring, that if any such consequences could be fairly drawn from the Premisses they have laid down, they would freely retract what they have said.

Now this Principle, of the Unity of the divine Nature, being thus secur'd amongst Christians, what if after this we should not be able to Explicate the Doctrine of the Trinity, or to tell in what manner the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost are distinguish'd, and yet but One God? I would ask; why should any one take it for granted, that God may not intimate to us something relating to his own Nature, which we could not have thought of our selves, any more than we can fully comprehend it, when it is thus intimated to us? *Canst thou*, (O vain Man! (to speak in the words of an ancient and honest Deist, recorded in the book of *Job*) *Canst thou by searching find out* Job 11. 7, 8, 9. *God? Canst thou find out the Almighty unto perfection? It is as high as Heaven, what canst thou do? Deeper than Hell, what canst thou know? The measure thereof is longer than the Earth, and broader than the Sea.* Which words, though they may immediately relate to the divine Providence, may be as fitly apply'd to the divine Nature. How should we come to know, that it is impossible there should have been Eternally, of and with the Father of all, a Son, and a Spirit, not Created, but necessarily partaking of the divine Nature, and Essential to it? I dare boldly affirm, that no Man can demonstrate the Impossibility of this; and if he cannot,

he ought not to make it an Objection against the Christian Revelation, that in making known to us the Method of our Salvation it hath instructed us in this Doctrine. 'Tis certainly as worthy of God, to reveal to us concerning himself more than we could have thought of without such a Revelation, as it is for him to do such great and kind things for us, as could not have enter'd into our hearts, if he had not assur'd us of them; especially since, though we are not able fully to comprehend all that this Doctrine implies, yet what we are taught concerning it by the Holy Scriptures is of great use to us, to make us understand and admire the Method, in which it hath pleas'd God to save Sinners; and it appears indeed to have been reveal'd to us for this very end.

Thus I have summ'd up the Doctrine which the Christian Revelation hath taught us concerning Almighty God, which whosoever will take the pains impartially to consider, as it is more fully and particularly represented to us in the New Testament, will find reason to acknowledge, that our *Mediator* hath made ample Provision for the relief of our Necessity in this Instance also.

To which I shall only add, that what the Sacred Writings contain upon this Subject, is express'd there in such manner, as to instruct the Illiterate, as well as the Learned part of Mankind; insomuch that wheresoever the Christian Religion is entertain'd, great Numbers even of the Common People have more true, more solid, and

and more useful apprehensions of Almighty God, than the Learned and Wise Men amongst the Pagans did ordinarily attain to; and surely this is a great Commendation of our Holy Religion, and a farther proof, that *This is a faithful Saying*, &c.

I should now have proceeded to consider, what our Lord hath taught us concerning our selves; and especially the Excellent Rules which he hath given us, for the direction of our Tempers and our Lives; but this I must reserve for the following Lecture.

FINIS.